

Crapo caved in

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho. A rock of principled courage one minute. A pile of wimpy political gibberish the next. Go figure.

On the morning of Oct. 8, Crapo was someone you could admire.

He heard GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump's tape-recorded boasts about making sexual advances on a married woman and sexually assaulting others because "when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything."

Then Crapo acted on his own sense of personal decency - and became the first sitting Republican senator to withdraw his support from Trump:

"I have reached a decision that I can no longer endorse Donald Trump. This is not a decision that I have reached lightly, but his pattern of behavior has left me no choice. His repeated actions and comments toward women have been disrespectful, profane and demeaning. I have spent more than two decades working on domestic violence prevention. Trump's most recent excuse of 'locker room talk' is completely unacceptable and is inconsistent with protecting women from abusive, disparaging treatment.

"Make no mistake - we need conservative leadership in the White House. I urge Donald Trump to step aside and allow the Republican Party to put forward a conservative candidate like Mike Pence who can defeat Hillary Clinton."

As Trump regained his footing with the GOP base, Crapo found himself on the defensive. For instance, the Idaho County Republican Central Committee was not amused:

"... You have relinquished your right to be associated with the party we represent."

Not a week passed before the senator caved. On last Friday's "Idaho Reports," he told host Melissa Davlin that he was considering voting for Trump after all.

In the 31/2 minutes Crapo took to explain himself, you heard a lot of posturing: "I haven't decided yet. ... I can tell you this: I cannot and will not vote for Hillary Clinton. ... There are in my opinion not only issues relating to her honesty and the way she has conducted the Clinton Foundation and so forth, but what will happen in the governing of this nation if we elect her?"

How do you reconcile those two positions? You can't.

Idaho's senior senator lost both his nerve and his moral compass.

JEERS ... to Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho. Unlike Crapo and Congressman Mike Simpson, R-Idaho - who walked away from Trump last week - or Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho, and Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter, who stood by him - Risch enjoyed the luxury of keeping his head down. He's not up for re-election and managed to be out of the country when the "Access Hollywood" tape emerged.

Since then, nine women have accused Trump of sexually abusing them. And the man who would be president has threatened to damage our "more perfect union" by undermining public trust in the election process itself.

Only then did Risch come forward and declare his allegiance to Trump.

Although he's "disgusted by the vulgar and indefensible revelations relating to the Republican nominee's character," Risch said, "Hillary Clinton cannot be allowed to become president."

All of which brings to mind the searing indictment Republican operative - and John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign senior strategist - Steve Schmidt issued last week:

"What this exposes, though, is much deeper, and goes to the Republican Party as an institution. This (Trump) candidacy, the magnitude of its disgrace to the country, is almost impossible, I think, to articulate. But it has exposed the intellectual rot in the Republican Party. ... And what we have seen ... over the course of the last year, these candidates who have repeatedly put their party ahead of the country, denying what is so obviously clear to anybody who's watching about his complete and total manifest unfitness for this office."

Putting the party before the good of the country; that about sums it up, doesn't it, Sen. Risch?

CHEERS ... to Congressman Labrador, Sen. Crapo and Congressman Simpson. As a rule of thumb, incumbents have every reason to avoid debating their election opponents.

They have more campaign money.

They're usually ahead in the polls.

Getting on the same stage with an unknown, underfunded challenger merely elevates the opponent's standing.

It also typically puts the incumbent's record under scrutiny.

This year, the three Republicans got a pass.

Democrats James Piotrowski, who is facing Labrador, Jerry Sturgill, who is taking on Crapo, and Jennifer Martinez, who is running against Simpson, all managed to blow a deadline, thereby canceling the "Idaho Debates."

Nobody expected what happened next. The Republicans gave their opponents a second chance.

Crapo joined Sturgill on "Idaho Reports." Simpson has agreed to appear with Martinez on that same program. And Labrador gave Piotrowski the opportunity to take shots at his record Monday on a debate broadcast by Boise's KTVB.

That's called putting the voters first.

JEERS ... to state Sen. Marv Hagedorn, R-Meridian. If you were curious how a legislative task force could walk away from the plight of children who are dying because their faith-healing parents refused to get them medical care, consider Hagedorn's recent tweet.

Said Hagedorn, who sits on that task force: "As I sit listening in the Faith Healing Task Force, I can't seem to shake the belief that there is a tie between faith healing and a woman's right to choose."

Here's the connection, senator.

Anti-abortion rights zealots - and the politicians who cater to them - believe a fetus' right to life trumps the rights of the mother.

But once that child is born, his right to life comes second to the religious beliefs of his parents.

Please explain.

CHEERS ... to Washington Secretary of State Kim Wyman. The only Republican holding statewide office along the entire Pacific Coast, Wyman is in a tough spot.

When the presidential nominee of her party, Donald Trump, said the election process is "rigged" against him, Wyman had to choose between her party and her profession as Washington's chief elections officer.

Trump's claim, she said, was beyond ridiculous.

"The voting system is highly decentralized, with each state, red, blue and purple, running their own elections with a total of over 9,000 election professionals who are directly accountable to elected or appointed officials," Wyman said. "It makes no sense that election managers would somehow indulge in a conspiracy across party lines and state lines."

Good for her. - M.T.